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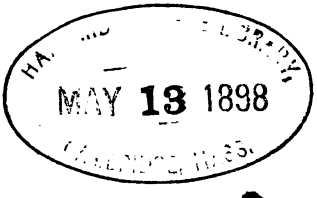

Pierre La Rose,

Cambridge.

Prefatory Note.

FOR kind permission to reprint "Wordsworth's Grave," "Ver Tenebrosum," and "England to Ireland," my thanks are due to the Editors of the *National Review* and the *Spectator*.

I have omitted from "Ver Tenebrosum" one sonnet which seemed coloured by party passion to its distinct detriment as poetry. There may possibly be others which lay themselves open to the same charge, but I have found it difficult to exclude them without disturbing the general coherence of the body of verse to which they belong.

Twenty "Epigrams" are transferred to these pages from a former volume of mine, which, from the circumstance of its merely provincial publication, and the fact of its having found few readers, I have thought a legitimate source to lay under contribution.

W. W.

TO

JAMES BROMLEY,

OF

Lathom, Lancashire.

ERE vandal lords with lust of gold accurst
Deface each hallowed hillside we revere—
Ere cities in their million-throated thirst
Menace each sacred mere—
Let us give thanks because one nook hath been
Unflooded yet by desecration's wave,
The little churchyard in the valley green
That holds our Wordsworth's grave.

'Twas there I plucked these elegiac blooms,
There where he rests 'mid comrades fit and few,
And thence I bring this growth of classic tombs,
An offering, friend, to you—
You who have loved like me his simple themes,
Loved his sincere large accent nobly plain,
And loved the land whose mountains and whose streams
Are lovelier for his strain.

It may be that his manly chant, beside
More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune ;
It may be, thought has broadened since he died
Upon the century's noon ;
It may be that we can no longer share
The faith which from his fathers he received ;
It may be that our doom is to despair
Where he with joy believed ;—

Enough that there is none since risen who sings
A song so gotten of the immediate soul,
So instant from the vital fount of things
Which is our source and goal ;
And though at touch of later hands there float
More artful tones than from his lyre he drew,
Ages may pass ere trills another note
So sweet, so great, so true.

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Wordsworth's Grave.

I.

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower,
is here ;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows ;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with
him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon : 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted ; faithless, done his deep faith
wrong ;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell :—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they came ;
And that secluded spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name ;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II.

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave !
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then ?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men ?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine ;
Not Shakspere's cloudless, boundless human view ;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine ;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love : for these are parts of peace.

III.

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone!—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned? ay, to the song's ecstatic core!
But far removed were clangour, storm and feud;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV.

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things ;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings,
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade :
The stars, unkenned by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick nature's hem and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him ; in gloom his radiance set, and those
Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elfish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seër* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs blue:
Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

V.

Peace—peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek!
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal and arm and plenish and sustain?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go prankt in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free ;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough ;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The kindly river rails not as it glides ;
And suave and charitable, the winning air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI.

Nature ! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights and days,
"Laud me who will : not tuneless are your throats ;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise."

We falter, half-rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-defiled.
One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast home.

And here, at home, still bides he; but he sleeps;
Not to be wakened even at thy word;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas thou!

VII.

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift *he* gave; and peace! the shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.

Ver Tenebrosum.

Ver Tenebrosum :

SONNETS OF MARCH AND APRIL, 1885.

I.

THE SOUDANESE.

THEY wrong'd not us, nor sought 'gainst us to wage
The bitter battle. On their God they cried
For succour, deeming justice to abide
In heaven, if banish'd from earth's vicinage.
And when they rose with a gall'd lion's rage,
We, on the captor's, keeper's, tamer's side,
We, with the alien tyranny allied,
We bade them back to their Egyptian cage.
Scarce knew they who we were! A wind of blight
From the mysterious far north-west we came.
Our greatness now their veriest babes have learn'd,
Where, in wild desert homes, by day, by night,
Thousands that weep their warriors unreturn'd,
O England, O my country, curse thy name!

II.

HASHEEN.

"OF British arms, another victory!"
  Triumphant words, through all the land's
    length sped.
  Triumphant words, but, being interpreted,
Words of ill sound, woful as words can be.
Another carnage by the drear Red Sea—
  Another efflux of a sea more red!
  Another bruising of the hapless head
Of a wrong'd people yearning to be free.
Another blot on her great name, who stands
  Confounded, left intolerably alone
  With the dilating spectre of her own
Dark sin, uprisen from yonder spectral sands:
  Penitent more than to herself is known;
England, appall'd by her own crimson hands.

III.

THE ENGLISH DEAD.

GIVE honour to our heroes fall'n, how ill
Soe'er the cause that bade them forth to die.
Honour to him, the untimely struck, whom high
In place, more high in hope, 'twas fate's harsh will
With tedious pain unsplendidly to kill.
Honour to him, doom'd splendidly to die,
Child of the city whose foster-child am I,
Who, hotly leading up the ensanguin'd hill
His charging thousand, fell without a word—
Fell, but shall fall not from our memory.
Also for them let honour's voice be heard
Who nameless sleep, while dull time covereth
With no illustrious shade of laurel tree,
But with the poppy alone, their deeds and death.

IV.

GORDON.

IDLE although our homage be and vain,
Who loudly through the door of silence press
And vie in zeal to crown death's nakedness,
Not therefore shall melodious lips refrain
Thy praises, gentlest warrior without stain,
Denied the happy garland of success,
Foil'd by dark fate, but glorious none the less,
Greatest of losers, on the lone peak slain
Of Alp-like virtue. Not to-day, and not
To-morrow, shall thy spirit's splendour be
Oblivion's victim ; but when God shall find
All human grandeur among men forgot,
Then only shall the world, grown old and blind,
Cease, in her dotage, to remember Thee.

V.

GORDON (*concluded*).

ARAB, Egyptian, English—by the sword
Cloven, or pierced with spears, or bullet-mown—
In equal fate they sleep: their dust is grown
A portion of the fiery sands abhorred.
And thou, what hast thou, hero, for reward,
Thou, England's glory and her shame? O'erthrown
Thou liest, unburied, or with grave unknown
As his to whom on Nebo's height the Lord
Showed all the land of Gilead, unto Dan;
Judah sea-fringed; Manasseh and Ephraim;
And Jericho palmy, to where Zoar lay;
And in a valley of Moab buried him,
Over against Beth-Peor, but no man
Knows of his sepulchre unto this day.

VI.

THE TRUE PATRIOTISM.

THE ever-lustrous name of patriot
To no man be denied because he saw
Where in his country's wholeness lay the flaw,
Where, on her whiteness, the unseemly blot.
England! thy loyal sons condemn thee.—
What!
Shall we be meek who from thine own breasts draw
Our fierceness? Not ev'n *thou* shalt overawe
Us thy proud children nowise basely got.
Be this the measure of our loyalty—
To feel thee noble and weep thy lapse the more.
This truth by thy true servants is confess'd—
Thy sins, who love thee most, do most deplore.
Know thou thy faithful! Best they honour thee
Who honour in thee only what is best.

VII.

RESTORED ALLEGIANCE.

DARK is thy trespass, deep be thy remorse,
O England! Fittingly thine own feet bleed,
Submissive to the purblind guides that lead
Thy weary steps along this rugged course.
Yet . . . when I glance abroad, and track the source
More selfish far, of other nations' deed,
And mark their tortuous craft, their jealous greed,
Their serpent-wisdom or mere soulless force,
Homeward returns my vagrant fealty,
Crying, "O England, shouldst thou one day fall,
Shatter'd in ruins by some Titan foe,
Justice were thenceforth weaker throughout all
The world, and Truth less passionately free,
And God the poorer for thine overthrow."

VIII.

THE POLITICAL LUMINARY.

A SKILFUL leech, so long as we were whole :
  Who scann'd the nation's every outward part,
  But ah ! misheard the beating of its heart.
Sire of huge sorrows, yet erect of soul.
Swift rider with calamity for goal,
  Who, overtasking his equestrian art,
  Unstall'd a steed full willing for the start,
But wondrous hard to curb or to control.
Sometimes we thought he led the people forth :
  Anon he seemed to follow where they flew ;
Lord of the golden tongue and smiting eyes ;
  Great out of season, and untimely wise :
A man whose virtue, genius, grandeur, worth,
  Wrought deadlier ill than ages can undo.

IX.

FOREIGN MENACE.

I MARVEL that this land, whereof I claim
The glory of sonship—for it *was* erewhile
A glory to be sprung of Britain's isle,
Though now it well-nigh more resembles shame—
I marvel that this land with heart so tame
Can brook the northern insolence and guile.
But most it angers me, to think how vile
Art thou, how base, from whom the insult came,
Unwieldy laggard, many an age behind
Thy sister Powers, in brain and conscience both;
In recognition of man's widening mind
And flexile adaptation to its growth:
Brute bulk, that bearest on thy back, half loth,
One wretched man, most pitied of mankind.

X.

HOME-ROOTEDNESS.

I CANNOT boast myself cosmopolite :
I own to "insularity," although
'Tis fall'n from fashion, as full well I know.
For somehow, being a plain and simple wight,
I am skin-deep a child of the new light,
But chiefly am mere Englishman below,
Of island-fostering ; and can hate a foe,
And trust my kin before the Muscovite.
Whom shall I trust if not my kin? And whom
Account so near in natural bonds as these
Born of my mother England's mighty womb,
Nursed on my mother England's mighty knees,
And lull'd as I was lull'd in glory and gloom
With cradle-song of her protecting seas?

XI.

OUR EASTERN TREASURE.

IN cobwebb'd corners dusty and dim I hear
A thin voice pipingly revived of late,
Which saith our India is a cumbrous weight,
An idle decoration, bought too dear.
The wiser world contemns not gorgeous gear ;
Just pride is no mean factor in a State ;
The sense of greatness keeps a nation great ;
And mighty they who mighty can appear.
It may be that if hands of greed could steal
From England's grasp the envied orient prize,
This tide of gold would flood her still as now :
But were she the same England, made to feel
A brightness gone from out those starry eyes,
A splendour from that constellated brow ?

XII.

REPORTED CONCESSIONS.

So we must palter, falter, cringe, and shrink;
And when the bully threatens, crouch or fly.—
There are who tell me with a shuddering eye
That war's red cup is Satan's chosen drink.
Who shall gainsay them? Verily I do think
War is as hateful almost, and well-nigh
As ghastly, as this terrible Peace whereby
We halt for ever on the crater's brink
And feed the wind with phrases, while we know
There gapes at hand the infernal precipice
O'er which a gossamer bridge of words we throw,
Yet cannot choose but hear from the abyss
The sulphurous gloom's unfathomable hiss
And simmering lava's subterranean flow.

XIII.

NIGHTMARE.

(Written during apparent imminence of war.)

IN a false dream I saw the Foe prevail.
The war was ended ; the last smoke had rolled
Away : and we, erewhile the strong and bold,
Stood broken, humbled, withered, weak and pale,
And moan'd, " Our greatness is become a tale
To tell our children's babes when we are old.
They shall put by their playthings to be told
How England once, before the years of bale,
Throned above trembling, puissant, grandiose, calm,
Held Asia's richest jewel in her palm ;
And with unnumbered isles barbaric she
The broad hem of her glistering robe impearl'd ;
Then when she wound her arms about the world,
And had for vassal the obsequious sea."

XIV.

LAST WORD: TO THE COLONIES.

BROTHERS beyond the Atlantic's loud expanse;
And you that rear the innumerable fleece
Far southward 'mid the ocean named of peace;
Britons that past the Indian wave advance
Our name and spirit and world-predominance;
And you our kin that reap the earth's increase
Where crawls that long-back'd mountain till it cease
Crown'd with the headland of bright esperance:—
Remote compatriots wheresoe'er ye dwell,
By your prompt voices ringing clear and true
We know that with our England all is well:
Young is she yet, her world-task but begun;
By you we know her safe, and know by you
Her veins are million but her heart is one.

Miscellaneous Sonnets, Lyrics, &c.

Mensis Lacrimarum.

(MARCH, 1885.)

MARCH, that comes roaring, maned, with rampant paws,
And bleatingly withdraws ;
March,—'tis the year's fantastic nondescript,
That, born when frost hath nipped
The shivering fields, or tempest scarred the hills,
Dies crowned with daffodils.
The month of the renewal of the earth
By mingled death and birth :
But, England ! in this latest of thy years
Call it—the Month of Tears.

To John of Brantwood.

After reading a Letter ("*Pall Mall Gazette*," *February* 15, 1886),

YES, you have carried, we are well aware,
Up to its highest point of cultivation,
The art of talking nonsense with an air
Of inspiration.

But how if people merely laugh to read
Your studies in reviling and abusing?
If, with intent to teach, you but succeed
In being amusing?

The comfort is, your wild words cannot kill,
And the undying dead are past your reaching.
Great is the modest Kentish savant still,
For all your screeching.

He never railed, but bore the general sneer,
Lived his grand life and lit the world from Beckenham.
Amongst earth's noblest sons he stands a peer,
Howe'er we reckon 'em.

As for St. Austin—well, we give you *him*.
On saints at all we set no monstrous value.
But Darwin's lamp can *you* avail to dim?
Nay, never shall you!

Think you we care, that one sour sage decries
George Eliot, whom immortal glory covers?
Whilst you are prating, in the hearts she lies
Of us her lovers.

And Mill and Grote and Gibbon and Voltaire
Are noxious trash, we learn.—Oh, how this cant would
Be pitied, if it came from anywhere
But holy Brantwood!

Yet, as to Gibbon, whom you bid us shun,
The principle* whereby you have attacked his
Imperial story, I myself for one
Shall put in practice,

* "None but the malignant or the weak study the decline and fall either of state or organism. Good men study, and wise men describe, only the growth and standing of things—not their decay."—*Mr. Ruskin on Gibbon.*

And shall eschew, from this day forward, all
Your later writing, biting, growling, grumbling—
One long crude history of decline and fall,
Sad as Rome crumbling.

The Mock Self.

FEW friends are mine, though many wights there be
Who, meeting oft a phantasm that makes claim
To be myself, and hath my face and name,
And whose thin fraud I wink at privily,
Account this light impostor very me.
What boots it undeceive them, and proclaim
Myself myself, and whelm this cheat with shame?
I care not, so he leave my true self free,
Impose not on me also; but alas!
I too, at fault, bewildered, sometimes take
Him for myself, and far from mine own sight,
Torpid, indifferent, doth mine own self pass;
And yet anon leaps suddenly awake,
And spurns the gibbering mime into the night.

Life without Health.

BEHOLD life builded as a goodly house
And grown a mansion ruinous
With winter blowing through its crumbling walls!
The master paceth up and down his halls,
And in the empty hours
Can hear the tottering of his towers
And tremor of their bases underground.
And oft he starts and looks around
At creaking of a distant door
Or echo of his footfall on the floor,
Thinking it may be one whom he awaits
And hath for many days awaited,
Coming to lead him through the mouldering gates
Out somewhere, from his home dilapidated.

On Exaggerated Deference to Foreign Literary Opinion.

WHAT! and shall *we*, with such submissive airs
As age demands in reverence from the young,
Await these crumbs of praise from Europe flung,
And doubt of our own greatness till it bears
The signet of your Goethes or Voltaires?
We who alone in latter times have sung
With scarce less power than Arno's exiled tongue—
We who are Milton's kindred, Shakspere's heirs.
The prize of lyric victory who shall gain
If ours be not the laurel, ours the palm?
More than the froth and flotsam of the Seine,
More than your Hugo-flare against the night,
And more than Weimar's proud elaborate calm,
One flash of Byron's lightning, Wordsworth's light.

The Lute-Player.

SHE was a lady great and splendid,
I was a minstrel in her halls.
A warrior like a prince attended
Stayed his steed by the castle walls.

Far had he fared to gaze upon her.
"O rest thee now, Sir Knight," she said.
The warrior wooed, the warrior won her,
In time of snowdrops they were wed.
I made sweet music in his honour,
And longed to strike him dead.

I passed at midnight from her portal,
Throughout the world till death I rove:
Ah, let me make this lute immortal
With rapture of my hate and love!

The Flight of Youth.

YOUTH! ere thou be flown away,
Surely one last boon to-day
Thou'lt bestow—
One last light of rapture give,
Rich and lordly fugitive!
Ere thou go.

What, thou canst not? What, all spent?
All thy spells of ravishment
Pow'rless now?
Gone thy magic out of date?
Gone, all gone that made thee great?—
Follow thou!

World-Strangeness.

STRANGE the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

When Birds were Songless.

WHEN birds were songless on the bough
I heard thee sing.
The world was full of winter, thou
Wert full of spring.

To-day the world's heart feels anew
The vernal thrill,
And thine beneath the rueful yew
Is wintry chill.

On Landor's "Hellenics."

COME hither, who grow cloyed to surfeiting
With lyric draughts o'ersweet, from rills that rise
On Hybla not Parnassus mountain : come
With beakers rinsed of the dulcifluous wave
Hither, and see a magic miracle
Of happiest science, the bland Attic skies
True-mirrored by an English well ;—no stream
Whose heaven-belying surface makes the stars
Reel, with its restless idiosyncrasy ;
But well unstirred, save when at times it takes
Tribute of lovers' eyelids, and at times
Bubbles with laughter of some sprite below.

To a Friend

Chafing at the enforced Idleness of Interrupted Health.

SOON may the edict lapse, that on you lays
This dire compulsion of infertile days,
This hardest penal toil, reluctant rest!
Meanwhile I count you eminently blest,
Happy from labours heretofore well done,
Happy in tasks auspiciously begun.
For they are blest that have not much to rue—
That have not oft mis-heard the prompter's cue,
Stammered and stumbled and the wrong parts played,
And life a Tragedy of Errors made.

England to Ireland.

(FEBRUARY, 1888.)

SPOUSE whom my sword in the olden time won me,
Winning me hatred more sharp than a sword—
Mother of children who hiss at or shun me,
Curse or revile me, and hold me abhorred—
Heiress of anger that nothing assuages,
Mad for the future, and mad from the past—
Daughter of all the implacable ages,
Lo, let us turn and be lovers at last!

Lovers whom tragical sin hath made equal,
One in transgression and one in remorse.
Bonds may be severed, but what were the sequel?
Hardly shall amity come of divorce.

Let the dead Past have a royal entombing,
O'er it the Future built white for a fane!
I that am haughty from much overcoming
Sue to thee, supplicate—nay, is it vain?

Hate and mistrust are the children of blindness,—
Could we but see one another, 'twere well!
Knowledge is sympathy, charity, kindness,
Ignorance only is feeder of hell.
Could we but gaze for an hour, for a minute,
Deep in each other's unfaltering eyes,
Love were begun—for that look would begin it—
Born in the flash of a mighty surprise.

Then should the ominous night-bird of Error,
Scared by a sudden irruption of day,
Flap his maleficent wings, and in terror
Flit to the wilderness, dropping his prey.
Than should we, growing in strength and in sweetness,
Fusing to one indivisible soul,
Dazzle the world with a splendid completeness,
Mightily single, immovably whole.

Thou, like a flame when the stormy winds fan it,
I, like a rock to the elements bare,—
Mixed by love's magic, the fire and the granite,
Who should compete with us, what should compare?
Strong with a strength that no fate might dissever,
One with a oneness no force could divide,
So were we married and mingled for ever,
Lover with lover, and bridegroom with bride.

The Raven's Shadow.

SEABIRD, elemental sprite,
  Moulded of the sun and spray—
Raven, dreary flake of night
  Drifting in the eye of day—
What in common have ye two
Meeting 'twixt the blue and blue?

Thou to eastward carriest
  The keen savour of the foam,—
Thou dost bear unto the west
  Fragrance from thy woody home,
Where perchance a house is thine
Odorous of the oozy pine.

Eastward thee thy proper cares,
  Things of mighty moment, call;
Thee to westward thine affairs
  Summon, weighty matters all:
I, where land and sea contest,
Watch you eastward, watch you west,

Till, in snares of fancy caught,
  Mystically changed ye seem,
And the bird becomes a thought,
  And the thought becomes a dream,
And the dream, outspread on high,
Lords it o'er the abject sky.

Surely I have known before
  Phantoms of the shapes ye be—
Haunters of another shore
  'Leaguered by another sea.
There my wanderings night and morn
Reconcile me to the bourn.

There the bird of happy wings
  Wafts the ocean-news I crave;
Rumours of an isle he brings
  Gemlike on the golden wave:
But the baleful beak and plume
Scatter immelodious gloom.

Though the flowers be faultless made,
  Perfectly to live and die—
Though the bright clouds bloom and fade
  Flowerlike 'midst a meadowy sky—
Where this raven roams forlorn
Veins of midnight flaw the morn.

He not less will croak and croak
  As he ever caws and caws,
Till the starry dance be broke,
  Till the sphery pæan pause,
And the universal chime
Falter out of tune and time.

Coils the labyrinthine sea
  Duteous to the lunar will,
But some discord stealthily
  Vexes the world-ditty still,
And the bird that caws and caws
Clasps creation with his claws.

Verses to Mr. Alfred Austin

on reading "Prince Lucifer."

BEYOND the chalet perched far up
In haunts where you espy
The gentian proffering its cup
Full of its own pure sky—

Beyond the glimpses of the lake
And voices of the kine,
Beyond the path where round you shake
The dark plumes of the pine—

I reach the solemn eminence
Where human footprints end,
I cross the virgin precinct whence
The cold grey streams descend,

And treading the weird world of ice
Where ghostlike summits tower,
I pluck this lonely edelweiss
Your Muse's mountain-flower.

Here, at your thought's adventurous height,
In this enfranchised air,
Somewhat of Nature's reckless might
My spirits seem to share.

I skirt the chasm and do not blanch,
And hardly turn I pale
When the long-thundering avalanche
Tears past me to the vale.

My vision from its large embrace
Omits the dwarfed and mean :
Though hamlets at the mountain's base
Lie hid, far lands are seen.

I look o'er life till it appears
Purged of its fume and fret,
Unclouded by ignoble fears
And hopes ignobler yet.

Its trivial tempests, as I climb,
Beneath my feet I leave ;
Above me the white brows of time
Wear the red rose of eve.

I thrill with earth's emotion—catch
The rapture of the sky—
And from reluctant nature snatch
A force that cannot die.

And though some chartless *mer de glace*
At length must give me pause,
Or some unbridged, unplumbed crevasse
Daunt me with monstrous jaws;

Though the unconquered lone aiguille
Guards its inviolate snow;
Though the last peaks defy me still
And bid me backward go;

I have seen the rocks in tumult hurled,
I have caught the torrent's joy,
And felt the ferment of the world
Which makes and can destroy.

Epigrams.

Epigrams.

'TIS human fortune's happiest height to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole;
Second in order of felicity
I hold it, to have walk'd with such a soul.

THE statue—Buonarroti said—doth wait,
Thrall'd in the block, for me to emancipate.
The poem—saith the poet—wanders free
Till I betray it to captivity.

To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
The vision, is the artist's best delight;
His bitterest pang, that he can ne'er do more
Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

IF Nature be a phantasm as thou say'st,
A splendid fiction and prodigious dream,
To reach the real and true I'll make no haste,
More than content with worlds that only seem.

THE Poet gathers fruit from every tree,
Yea, grapes from thorns and figs from thistles he.
Pluck'd by his hand, the basest weed that grows
Towers to a lily, reddens to a rose.

BROOK, from whose bridge the wandering idler peers
To watch thy small fish dart or cool floor shine,
I would that bridge whose arches all are years
Spann'd not a less transparent wave than thine!

To Art we go as to a well, athirst,
And see our shadow 'gainst its mimic skies,
But in its depth must plunge and be immersed
To clasp the naiad Truth where low she lies.

IN youth the artist voweth lover's vows
To Art, in manhood maketh her his spouse.
Well if her charms yet hold for him such joy
As when he craved some boon and she was coy!

IMMURED in sense, with fivefold bonds confined,
Rest we content if whispers from the stars
In waftings of the incalculable wind
Come blown at midnight through our prison-bars.

LOVE, like a bird, hath perch'd upon a spray
For thee and me to hearken what he sings.
Contented, he forgets to fly away;
But hush! . . . remind not Eros of his wings.

THINK not thy wisdom can illume away
The ancient tanglement of night and day.
Enough, to acknowledge both, and both revere:
They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

IN mid whirl of the dance of Time ye start,
Start at the cold touch of Eternity,
And cast your cloaks about you, and depart:
The minstrels pause not in their minstrelsy.

ON LONGFELLOW'S DEATH.

No puissant singer he, whose silence grieves
To-day the great West's tender heart and strong;
No singer vast of voice: yet one who leaves
His native air the sweeter for his song.

BYRON THE VOLUPTUARY.

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her chase.
Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.

ANTONY AT ACTIUM.

HE holds a dubious balance :—yet *that* scale,
Whose freight the world is, surely shall prevail ?
No ; Cleopatra droppeth into *this*
One counterpoising orient sultry kiss.

ART.

THE thousand painful steps at last are trod,
At last the temple's difficult door we win ;
But perfect on his pedestal, the god
Freezes us hopeless when we enter in.

KEATS.

HE dwelt with the bright gods of elder time,
  On earth and in their cloudy haunts above.
He loved them: and in recompense sublime,
  The gods, alas! gave him their fatal love.

AFTER READING "TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT."

YOUR Marlowe's page I close, my Shakspere's ope.
  How welcome—after drum and trumpet's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
  And vast curves of the gradual violin!

SHELLEY AND HARRIET WESTBROOK.

A STAR look'd down from heaven and loved a flower
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour:

Let eyes which trace his orbit in the spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud, tears.

THE PLAY OF "KING LEAR."

HERE Love the slain with Love the slayer lies;
Deep drown'd are both in the same sunless pool.
Up from its depths that mirror thundering skies
Bubbles the wan mirth of the mirthless Fool.

To Professor Dowden,

ON RECEIVING FROM HIM "THE LIFE OF SHELLEY."

FIRST, ere I slake my hunger, let me thank
The giver of the feast. For feast it is,
Though of ethereal, translunary fare—
His story who pre-eminently of men
Seemed nourished upon starbeams and the stuff
Of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam ;
Who hardly brooked on his impatient soul
The fleshly trammels ; whom at last the sea
Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds
Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.

In my young days of fervid poesy
He drew me to him with his strange far light,—
He held me in a world all clouds and gleams,
And vasty phantoms, where ev'n Man himself
Moved like a phantom 'mid the clouds and gleams.

Anon the Earth recalled me, and a voice
Murmuring of dethroned divinities
And dead times deathless upon sculptured urn—
And maidens of romance to whom asleep
At mid of night St. Agnes' love-dreams come—
And world-old passion of Philomela—
Awhile constrained me to a sweet duresse
And thraldom, lapping me in high content,
Soft as the bondage of white amorous arms.
And then a third voice, long unheeded—held
Claustral and cold, and dissonant and tame—
Found me at last with ears to hear. It sang
Of lowly sorrows and familiar joys,
Of simple manhood, artless womanhood,
And childhood fragrant as the limpid morn ;
And from the homely matter nigh at hand,
Rising and radiating, it disclosed
Spaces and avenues, calm heights and breadths
Of vision, whence I saw each blade of grass
With roots that groped about eternity,
And in each drop of dew upon each blade
The mirror of the inseparable All.

The first voice, then the second, in their turns
Had sung me captive. This voice sang me free.

Therefore, above all vocal sons of men,
Since him whose sightless eyes saw hell and heaven,
To Wordsworth be my homage, thanks, and love.
Yet dear is Keats, a lucid presence, great
With somewhat of a glorious soullessness.
And dear, and great with an excess of soul,
Shelley, the hectic flamelike rose of verse,
All colour, and all odour, and all bloom,
Steeped in the noonlight, glutted with the sun,
But somewhat lacking root in homely earth,
Lacking such human moisture as bedews
His not less starward stem of song, who, rapt
Not less in glowing vision, yet retained
His clasp of the prehensible, retained
The warm touch of the world that lies to hand,
Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day;
Who trusted nature, trusted fate, nor found
An Ogre, sovereign on the throne of things;
Who felt the incumbence of the unknown, yet bore
Without resentment the Divine reserve;

Who suffered not his spirit to dash itself
Against the crags and wavelike break in spray,
But 'midst the infinite tranquillities
Moved tranquil, and henceforth, by Rotha stream
And Rydal's mountain-mirror, and where flows
Yarrow thrice sung or Duddon to the sea,
And wheresoe'er man's heart is thrilled by tones
Struck from man's lyric heartstrings, shall survive.

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